

The Strangest Things by JHF53

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Adventure, Supernatural

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-09-01 14:09:25

Updated: 2019-09-16 16:50:13

Packaged: 2019-12-12 17:39:47

Rating: M

Chapters: 8

Words: 20,733

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Two years after the death of Jim Hopper, and just over four years after Will Byers went missing, everyone seems to have moved on. That is, until a signal is intercepted by Murray Bauman, and everyone must reunite to stop the Upside Down from entering our world. Again. Again.

1. Chapter 1: The Radio

November 7th, 1987. The new Byers residence. 11:23 pm.

"Darlin' you've got to let me know," Will sang along, sat on his bed and reading 'It', having recently received it as a gift from his Jonathan, in the spirit of Halloween. It was late at night as he read through the first chapter. "Should I stay or should I go?" he sang a little quieter as he reached the end of Georgie. Reading about his death after going out alone caused Will to remember back to almost exactly four years ago when he cycled down Mirkwood that fateful night. "If you say that you are mine," he practically muttered, remembering the cold of the Upside Down and laying in Castle Byers, singing this song to himself for a week. Rather than bring up any more traumatic memories, Will closed the book and turned off the stereo. In the room next to his, he heard El listening to a song that reminded her of the chief. He sighed. It was a little over two years ago that Hopper died, and neither El nor his mom had moved on. El he could understand, he was (legally) her father, but his mom was different. She'd moved on from Bob's death seemingly quicker than she had from Hopper's, despite the fact that Bob and her had been together infinitesimally longer than she'd been with the chief. He remembered Jonathan telling him that he hadn't seen her acting as strange as she was since he'd gone missing, though he'd clarified that she was nowhere near as hysterical as when Will was gone. He lay himself down in bed. It felt crazy that it'd been over two years since anything had happened with the Upside Down. It was almost routine by '85 for the party, his mom, Jonathan, Nancy, the chief and Steve to have some sort of Upside Down stopping adventure. He smiled. Maybe finally, he could actually lead a somewhat normal life.

Meanwhile, at the old Byers residence...

Murray Bauman sat at the living room table, looking at a Heathkit Ham Shack, which had noticeable burn marks. "Kid, what the hell is this?"

Dustin turned to Bauman, "It's a Heathkit Ham Shack. We used to have it in the AV club at school but El accidentally set fire to it. Mr

Clarke says he was able to fix it up though and let me to take it home, since he had new stuff coming in. It should be useful for tracing Russian radio signals, at which point we can find out any secrets."

"Great. Perfect. Now we can listen to Russian radio. Amazing job, Dustin." Murray responded, unimpressed. He turned to the other two. "Thanks for all your help but I think I'm done with this. There aren't any Russians we have to wor-"

"Hold on there, Bauman." Steve Harrington interrupted, "These Russians could still be working on getting to the Upside Down. I mean, they built that machine once, right?"

"Yes, but as I said, Alexei changed sides and was tragically shot dead. He was the only one who knew how to build the machine."

"How do you know that?" Robin asked, "I mean, it's not like he built it without any plans. They could be reopening the gate in Russia right now!"

"Yeah, and if they do, the Mind Flayer could come back." Dustin added. Murray sat, silent, for what felt like an hour.

"Alright. You know how to set this up?"

"Mr Clarke showed me before I left, so yeah."

"Well then, get going."

In the Wheeler's basement, Mike, Lucas and Max sat discussing A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors.

"Dude! That movie was so much better than the second one! They bought back Nancy man! Nancy's back!" Lucas near shouted.

"What? It makes no sense, how does someone pull someone else into a dream? Everyone knows that's impossible." Max quickly responded.

"It's better than the second one, but I think it should've ended when he died at the end of the first. Without that stupid end scene." Mike

added.

"Yeah I'm with Mike on this one, Lucas."

"You two are crazy," Lucas joked, "how couldn't you like this? It's so cool how they went full circle. Nancy killed him, and then he killed Nancy!"

"Very easi-" Mike began, before Nancy burst the door open.

"What the hell are you guys doing? It's almost midnight! Go home! Some of us need sleep, you know."

"Sorry Nancy." Lucas said, standing up. Max also stood and they said they goodbyes to Mike before quietly leaving so as to not wake Karen, Ted or Holly. Mike decided he couldn't be bothered to walk upstairs, so he passed out on the couch in the basement as Nancy went back to bed.

Mike woke up the next morning to the sound of knocking on his front door. Nobody was left in the house except for him, so he was obligated to answer the door himself. He walked out of the basement and was blinded by the sunlight through the windows. He opened the door to see Dustin. "Hey Dusti-"

"Oh thank god, I was about to knock the door down. What've you been doing? You didn't answer me when I called you."

"You called me? What time is it?"

"Yeah, it's 2pm. What happened?"

"I was asleep. It's been a long couple of days, with the anniversary of Will going missing I didn't get much sleep, and then I stayed up pretty late last night with Lucas and Max."

"Have you been out of it for the last four years? We got Will back, safe and sound."

"I know, it's just... since he and El left it sorta feels like we not only lost him for good but also lost El in the process. It's been hard."

"I guess that makes sense... anyway, you have to come see what me and Murray got working last night."

"What is it?"

"Just come on!"

While Mike got his bike out and prepared to leave, Dustin walked next door to Lucas, where he apologised for not calling but Mike wouldn't respond. As Lucas came out with his bike, Mike rode out in front of the two. "Let's get going." He smiled and started riding away, followed closely by the other two.

"Did you put on the same clothes as last night?" Lucas asked.

"I never took them off." Mike responded, laughing.

"Gross dude." Lucas chuckled.

Steve walked out of Jonathan's old bedroom and into the living room, where Murray sat with the Heathkit. "Thanks again man for letting me crash here. I don't know what I would've done if you hadn't."

"Probably gone to your girlfriend's." Murray sarcastically responded.

"Oh, no Murray we ar-"

"I know, I was joking you idiot."

"Oh. That makes sense."

Steve heard a knock at the door and, at Murray's request, asked for the "secret code".

"It's me Murray, I don't need the code." Dustin said.

"Okay, let him in." Murray told Steve. He opened the door and was confronted with Dustin, Mike, Lucas and Max who had joined the boys on their way.

"Harrington!" Dustin said in surprise. The two shook hands, fist

bumped and had a feigned lightsaber fight, which Steve won. Dustin's guts spilled out and the two laughed, while the party looked on in confusion. Murray looked up and noticed the kids.

"Why the hell have you brought them here?!" Murray shouted at Dustin.

"I thought they might want to see it."

"See what?" Mike asked. Dustin moved out of the way to reveal the Heathkit.

"Holy shit!" Exclaimed Lucas, who ran inside. "Is this Mr Clarke's Heathkit?"

"In the flesh." Dustin replied, smiling. "We thought it was irreparable, but Mr Clarke finally got it done. We're listening to Russian radio signals."

"Don't tell them!" Murray shouted again, pushing Lucas away from the Heathkit.

"Calm down Murray, they know everything already, remember?" Steve told him.

"Ugh, fine." Murray grunted.

Dustin, Lucas and Murray sat with the Heathkit, fiddling with it to try and get something. Meanwhile Steve, Max and Mike were in the kitchen drinking Coke.

"So, you live here now?" Mike asked.

"Yeah. Parents kicked me out and I don't make enough from the video store to get an apartment."

"Why didn't you move in with Robin?"

"She still lives with her parents so it would've been awkward." Steve laughed. "I'm fine with it though, I get to work with my best friend and help take down evil Russians."

"How many have you taken down?" Asked Max, smirking.

"One." Steve responded.

"That guy you knocked out under Starcourt doesn't count, Steve." Dustin shouted from the living room.

Steve looked to the floor, annoyed, while Mike and Max laughed. The laughter didn't last long before something came over on the radio.

"Как вы нашли американца?"

"После аварии в штатах он оказался на другой стороне портала. Мы поймали его, и он был заключен здесь."

Everyone fell silent as the two Russian men laughed.

"Вы обеспокоены тем, что американцы подхватят этот сигнал?" the first asked.

"Нет, они слишком примитивны для этой технологии. Вы должны приехать на Камчатку, вы можете мучить его с нами!"

They laughed again and Murray turned the radio off.

"What the hell was that?" Came the burning question from Mike.

"It's the Russians." Dustin told him.

"They were having a conversation." Murray said.

"What did they say?" Steve asked, worried.

"It was something along the lines of 'How did you get the American?' 'After the accident in the states he was in the portal. We found and imprisoned him here.' 'Aren't you worried about Americans hearing this?' 'No they're too primitive, you should come to Kamchatka and torture him with us!'" Murray translated.

The six exchanged silent looks with shocked expressions on their faces.

"I think they've got an old friend." Finished Murray.

2. Chapter 2: The Reunion

"Holy shit." Mike whispered, "You don't think it's...?"

"Sounds like it." Dustin responded, looking down at the Heathkit.

"We're gonna have to do something about this. Before they kill him." Steve said, "If not for us, then for him and El."

"It might not be that simple." Murray told them, "They mentioned that they found him on the other side of the portal. That means they might have reopened the gate."

"I knew it!" Shouted Steve, with perhaps a bit too much happiness.

"If they have the means to reopen the gate, then there's more reason for us to go there." Lucas argued.

"Yeah, if we don't stop this soon they're gonna destroy the world." Added Max.

"I never said we'd ignore it, children, but we cannot do anything about it ourselves, I think... I think we need to call Dr Owens."

"Do you not remember how long it took them last time? It's gonna take months for the government to arrange something without risking the end of the world, by which point the world might have already ended." Dustin retorted. "We don't have time to call the government, this is something we have to do ourselves."

Murray sat silently, thinking, before he looked up. "I have to make a call. All of you out."

Everyone obliged and left the house, leaving Murray alone. They stayed together and packed the bikes into Steve's car before heading off to Mike's basement, where they'd formulate a plan to bring back to Murray once he was finished.

Meanwhile, Joyce Byers sat in her kitchen reading a newspaper with a cigarette in her mouth, when she heard the phone ring. For a

moment she remembered the night just over four years ago, when she received a call from Will in the Upside Down, but quickly snapped out of it. She picked up the phone and said nothing before she heard the voice of Murray.

"Joyce, I have news. Big, big news. You're gonna wanna come back for this. You know where I am, you can stay here."

Then silence. He hung up. She called back and Murray didn't let her speak, he instantly talked more.

"Listen, Joyce, I can't talk to you over the phone, just get the kids out of school for a week or so and bring them down. Trust me, we're gonna need them."

From the tone of his voice alone, she realised the severity of the situation. She packed a week's worth of clothes for El, Will, Jonathan and herself, loaded the car and waited for them to return home so they could set off immediately.

Back in Hawkins, Robin was working the video store, filling in for Keith, who was still sick after weeks. There was a call at the front desk and she picked up. "Hel-"

"Robin, it's Murray. Get to my place ASAP."

"Murray, I'm at work I ca-"

"Say it's a family emergency."

And he hung up, leaving Robin confused. She grabbed some paper and wrote "*Had to leave, family emergency*" on it in marker, before placing it on the front desk, closing the store up and running to her car.

Before long, Murray heard a knock on the front door. "Secret code?" He shouted from the living room table.

"It's Robin, idiot. You called like ten minutes ago."

Murray got up and let Robin into the house. "Sorry, it's just harder to be sure without the cameras. Come in, this is big."

Will sat in the driver's seat of the car, having recently received a license and been allowed "shared custody" of Jonathan's car, as he put it. It was his turn to drive and so the brothers sat El in the back and turned up the radio as they drove out of the mall parking lot and back home. They heard the opening to the song and looked at each other, smiling. "We're leavin' together!" they sang in unison. "But still it's farewell. And maybe we'll come back to Earth, who can tell?" In the back, El sighed, bored by the singing of the two, but Will really didn't care, they were already too into the song, with Jonathan singing Will's backup vocals. However, Jonathan noticed that El looked bored.

"C'mon El, join in!" Jonathan shouted over the song.

After a moments hesitation, El gave in, and the three sang together.

"It's the final countdown!" El knew the song like the back of her hand by now, having been with the pair to the mall practically every weekend for over a year now.

"The final countdown!"

The three continued to sing the songs on Will and Jonathan's mix tapes all the way home, which took no longer than twenty minutes, but was a blast the whole way. However, upon their arrival, they saw Joyce standing outside, in front of the car. "Are we late?" Will asked, confused.

"No, if anything we're early." Jonathan replied. El noticed that Joyce looked worried and got out the second the car had stopped, shortly before Will and Jonathan stepped out on either side, but were stopped by Joyce.

"Boys, you two are driving on your own. I got a call from Murray, and it's urgent. He said to bring as much as we can, so we're all going and we're staying at Murray's."

"What? Why?" Will questioned.

"I don't know. But we're going back to Hawkins. Now get back in the car. El, you're with me."

Will and Jonathan looked at each other, reopened the doors and sat down. Will started the ignition and followed Joyce out of the driveway.

"You want us to go to Russia?" Robin asked, dumbfounded.

"Yes, all of us." Murray told her.

"Even the kids?"

"Let's face it Robin, those kids are more experienced fighting monsters than anyone else. I mean, the Demogorgon, the Demodogs, the Mind Flayer in the hospital and in Starcourt. They're gonna be a valuable asset if the Russians plan to use the Upside Down again."

Robin hesitated before sighing. "Fine, I guess I'm up for it. Gotta have everyone we can get, right?" She chuckled. "What do you need me to do?"

"Well first I need you to find Steve and tell him and the kids the plan."

"I can do that, I know where he probably is."

"Oh, and tell him he's gonna have to find somewhere else to sleep for tonight and tomorrow."

Steve and the kids sat in Mike's basement coming up with a plan.

"I think we should request to take a military plane from Dr Owens and then fly it over but in a way that we can't be seen. Get some parachutes, jump out and we storm the place." Lucas suggested.

The silence that followed told him that his idea was not a good one. While they thought of a new strategy, there was a knock on the front

door. They heard a shout.

"Hey Dingus! It's Robin! I just talked to Murray, he has a plan!"

Steve went up the stairs and allowed Robin in. "What are you guys doing down here?" Robin asked as she walked into the basement.

"Coming up with a plan." Dustin said smiling.

"Good news, we already have one. Bad news is that Steve might have to stay here until we enact the plan."

"What? Why?" Steve and Mike asked in unison.

"No idea. Ask him."

"What exactly is the plan?" Max asked Robin.

Robin smirked. "You're gonna love this."

While out on the town with some friends, Nancy decided to abandon them for a few minutes and go to the grocery store, to pick up some food for when her mom inevitably forgot to get any after sitting at the pool with Holly all day. As she walked out of Bradley's Big Buy, she saw a familiar car approaching with music playing. She heard two voices singing along.

"He was singin,

Bye bye, miss American Pie,

Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry

Them good ole boys were drinking whiskey and rye

Singin' this'll be the day that I die

This'll be the day that I die."

She put her arm out and the car rolled to a stop just next to her. Jonathan Byers looked to the right and saw her face for the first time in a year.

"Holy shit! Nancy? How are you?" Jonathan asked, elated. "I'm so sorry we haven't visited, work's a bitch." He opened the door and stepped out. Nancy was still awestruck that Jonathan and Will had just returned to Hawkins. The pair stood awkwardly while American Pie finished playing on the stereo. There was silence before Hold The Line came on. The pair embraced, tears of joy in each of their eyes. It had been an awfully lonely time for each of them, trying to keep a long distance relationship going for so long, that it near fizzled. They kissed and Jonathan shut the front door. The two got into the back of the car, still embracing and kissing. Will took out the cassette and asked Nancy where she was going.

"Oh I was just going back to work."

"Well that's the thing. I think something's happening with... it."

Nancy stopped and became rigid. "How do you know?"

"Murray called mom and said we need to get everyone and that it's important. I think we need to go to his place."

"Can I take my shopping home first?"

Joyce pulled up at her old house. Thousands of memories came back in an instant. Fighting with Lonnie, Hopper arriving with the bike, painting the letters, putting up lights, Will in the wall, that Christmas after Will returned, watching Cheers with Bob, Will's map, Bob's deciphering of said map, the magnets falling off of the fridge, El reading Hopper's letter, closing the door for what she thought was the last time. It was almost too much. She got out of the car with El and walked to the door. Before she even knocked, Murray opened up.

"Hey Joyce."

"I thought you'd ask for a password." Joyce joked.

"I saw you pull up through the curtain." Murray laughed. He reached out to El and they shook hands. "Good to see you again, kid." El nodded silently.

"What's so urgent Murray?" Joyce asked him, causing his face to drop.

"Just when you thought life was back to normal, we heard something. From Kamchatka."

"Where?"

"It's a place in Russia."

Joyce realised the problem and shook her head. "No. I'm not doing this again. The portal here is shut, that's all I care about." She turned around and started to walk back to the car, when Murray spoke again.

"We think Jim's there."

She stopped and turned to face him. "How'd we get to this point? I thought we were done. I let you buy my house for a cheap price so you could reintegrate into society in a small town. I thought that was the end of it. But now we've got Russians and a promise of Jim. So, Murray, tell me how the hell you got this signal."

"The four of us were in the bus when the Demod-" Dustin was interrupted by the front door opening.

"Mike? You awake yet?" It was Nancy.

"Yeah, we're in the basement. We need to talk, come down." Mike responded. There was a faint sound of music coming from upstairs. It was stereotypical Medieval music, which only made everyone more confused. "Nancy, why are you playing Medieval music?" he asked.

"Please do not call me Nancy," came a voice from upstairs, which caused the boys to look at each other in disbelief, knowing who it was instantly. "I prefer the name..."

The basement door burst open, and the four best friends shouted in unison. "Will the Wise!"

Will ran down the stairs and the boys shared a hug. After what seemed like hours to Max, Steve and Robin, they let go of each other, and the other three saw each of them, teary eyed and ecstatic that they were seeing each other for the first time in over a year. Behind

Will was Jonathan and Nancy, who came into the basement and started talking with Steve.

"Why are you guys back here?" Steve asked, smiling.

"Mom got a call from Murray. No clue what it's about but it seemed important. She and El are on their way to his now." Jonathan told him.

"Oh, we know what he's on about." Steve responded.

"Yeah, but it might be difficult to do it." Added Robin.

Joyce sat in her old living room, facing Murray directly, who began to explain everything that happened since he moved into her house.

"When I moved in here, I genuinely tried to settle into a normal life. I tried to retire. And I did, for a while. But I got the urge to make sure that the Russians were gone from Hawkins. So, I started working with Steve, Robin and Dustin to try and see if there were any. Dustin bought me this radio," he pointed to the Heathkit, "and we got it working earlier today. He brought over the other kids and we heard something in Russian. It was a conversation between two Russians, and we think it might be about Jim and the Upside Down."

"What did they say?"

"Something about finding an American on the other side of a portal and that someone should come to 'Kamchatka' and torture him."

"And you want to go to Kamchatka and rescue him, destroying the drill in the process?"

"Exactly, but we need everyone. That's why I've asked for the kids too."

Joyce looked in shock, "What? The kids?"

"Joyce, let's face it, these kids are more experienced than anyone. They've been up against every one of them more than either of us have. And they're growing up, I mean, they can drive, they're not as

young as they used to be anymore."

Joyce stayed silent, staring at Murray. She looked to the side, seeing El turn to her and nod, smiling slightly. She smiled back and turned to Murray. "Looks like you need all the help you can get, so I guess we'll come too."

Murray smirked but immediately brought up another concern, "I don't know how we're gonna explain all the kids being out of school though."

Joyce thought, long and hard. "I have an idea. All we have to do is get one last person roped into this bullshit before we can finally leave this all behind."

Scott Clarke sat at home, having a fairly boring Saturday night. Since he and Jen broke up, every night had been boring. That was, until there was an urgent knock on his door. He opened it to see Joyce Byers, of all people, with that weird bald man who used to report for the Chicago Sun-Times. "Joyce?" He asked, confused, "When did you get back here?"

"A couple hours ago."

"Well it's nice to see you."

"Nice to see you too Scott! How's Jen?"

"Oh, we..." Scott trailed off.

"I see... Well, we need to talk to you about something. Mind taking a ride with us?"

Scott was confused, "A ride? Why?"

"Just... Please, trust me. You're gonna wanna hear this."

He followed the pair out to Joyce's car and got in the back, next to a young child wearing mostly black, with slicked back hair dyed black. "Hello! I don't believe we've met, I'm Scott Clarke."

"Oh trust me, we've met." El told him. Scott looked forward to Joyce.

"Who is this."

"El."

"El as in... Eleanor?" Scott asked, "Are you Michael's Swedish cousin?"

"Oh, Scott, you've got a lot of catching up to do." El told him, smirking.

3. Chapter 3: The Teacher

This was not what Scott had expected today. He thought it would be a quiet night in, where he could just be sorry for himself. But no, instead he was parked outside of Mike Wheeler's house in a car with Joyce Byers, the girl Mike had claimed was his cousin and the man who exposed a Government cover up. The four got out of the car and walked to the house. Murray knocked and Scott heard Mike run up the stairs to answer. The look of shock on his face was telling, but it wasn't long before Mike turned and saw El trailing behind the other three. The two ran to each other and shared a long, seemingly passionate kiss. Scott turned to Joyce, incredibly confused, and she gave him a look as if to say "I'll explain inside."

Why did he feel nothing? It was the first time seeing her in a year, but he felt nothing when he kissed her. They used to be inseparable, but now he thought it might be gone. He didn't let it show though, and greeted Joyce, Murray, El and, shockingly, his old science teacher and leader of the AV club. "Everyone else is downstairs. I tell you, Murray, it's a risky plan."

"I know Mike, but it's the best we've got."

The four followed him downstairs and sat down. That's when Mr Clarke finally spoke up. "I'm sorry, everybody, but what is this all about?"

Joyce answered. "It's a long story."

"I have plenty of time."

Dustin sighed, knowing that nobody else knew where to start. "Do you remember when Will went missing?"

"Of course."

"Well basically, me, Mike and Lucas went looking for him, and while looking, we found El." He pointed to the young girl, who'd reverted back to her "*Bitchin*" look, as she called it.

El spoke up, "I grew up in a lab where I was trained to use my abilities for bad things. I was forced to kill animals and people."

"It wasn't a fun place from what we've heard." Dustin finished.

"We brought El to the school to use the Heathkit after she managed to contact Will using Mike's radio with her powers. That's when you stopped us and we went to Will's memorial. After that, El used her powers to freeze Troy and make him pee himself." Lucas told him.

"That was you?" Mr Clarke asked, half laughing.

"Yeah, with the mind abilities." She responded, smiling.

"Mind abilities?"

"I used to be able to move things with my mind, and I could contact people through their minds if I was in something like a sensory deprivation tank."

"I see..."

"Anyway, afterwards we went into the AV room and El used the Heathkit to contact Will. We heard him talking about him being somewhere cold an-" Dustin continued.

"That's when he was in the wall. I saw him in my wall." Joyce interrupted.

Mr Clarke looked on in shock, but said nothing.

"That's when the Heathkit set fire. After that, we figured out that Will might be in a different dimension. Then, we asked you about how to cast Shadow Walk to get to another dimension called the Upside Down. It's basically an evil version of our world." Mike told him. "After that, we discovered that Will was being chased by an evil creature that we called the Demogorgon."

"It's the same thing that killed Barb." Nancy added.

"We built a sensory deprivation paddling pool for Eleven as per your instructions and found out that Will was in the Upside Down. Hopper

and Joyce went to find Will in the Upside Down while Nancy, Jonathan and Steve fought the Demogorgon head on. They went to Hawkins Lab and told them where El would be in exchange for access to the Upside Down. They saved Will, while we were in the school. The government agents came for us and we barely managed to escape before the Demogorgon left Nancy, Jonathan and Steve alone to come attack the corpses that El had just left in order to protect us." Lucas said.

"It could track blood, like a shark." Dustin mentioned.

"We hid in a classroom but the Demogorgon found us, and El seemingly sacrificed herself to destroy it." Mike told him.

"That Christmas I puked up a slug creature and was transported back to the Upside Down for a moment, before I went back to Christmas dinner." Will mentioned, speaking for the first time as he relived the experience through the eyes of his friends.

"That October, Will was having flashbacks to the Upside Down, which weren't uncommon, but he saw new things, a giant monster in the sky that the boys called the Mind Flayer." Joyce told the teacher.

"And then I found that slug thing Will puked up rummaging through my trash. I brought it in to show you but was pulled away before I could." Dustin said, "Turns out it was a Demogorgon-dog."

"A Demodog?" Mr Clarke joked.

"Exactly."

"I was transported back to the Upside Down on the school field and the Mind Flayer put some of it's essence inside me. I was possessed for a while." Will mentioned. "Me, Hopper, mom, Bob and Mike went to the Lab, where I had to be sedated because of the possession. Bob ended up sacrificing himself for all of us."

"Meanwhile, me, Lucas, Steve and Dustin were fighting Demodogs at the scrapyard, because they had multiplied significantly." Max said.

"Yeah, turns out the portal in the Lab hadn't been closed, so there were Upside Down tunnels running all underneath Hawkins and full

of Demodogs." Added Steve.

"As this went on, Jonathan and I went to see Murray in an attempt to get justice for Barb by exposing the government." Said Nancy, turning to Jonathan and smiling slightly.

"We went back to Will's place and were rescued by El, who had been living with Hopper for almost a year." Mike said, "She and him went to close the gate while Nancy, Jonathan and Joyce went to exorcise Will of the Mind Flayer. The rest of us went and destroyed the tunnels below the town."

"Then, during the Summer of '85, I was trying to call my girlfriend using a giant radio tower I made when I intercepted a Russian signal. I went to Steve and Robin at Scoops and the three of us, plus Lucas's little sister Erica, found out that there was a Russian base below Starcourt." Dustin told him.

"At the same time, my fridge magnets weren't sticking, which is when I came to you. You mentioned the giant machine that could disrupt the magnetic field and, fearing the worst, me and Hopper went to find out what happened. We found a Russian scientist and took him to Murray, who speaks Russian. Alexei, the Russian, helped us out and told us that there was a drill to another universe in Hawkins." Joyce told him.

"While all that was going on, the part of the Mind Flayer that was exorcised out of Will took over the bodies of all the people who died in the Starcourt fire." Jonathan added.

"Steve, Erica, Dustin and me were in the Russian base when we discovered the drill for ourselves. We just about managed to escape but were followed by some Russians." Mentioned Robin.

"Me, Lucas, Mike, Will, Nancy, Jonathan and El were attacked by a thirty foot tall version of the Mind Flayer which was made of the melted, fleshy bodies of near everyone who died except for my brother. It attacked El and left something in her leg. We went to Starcourt after receiving a message from Dustin and rescued the Scoops Troop." Max continued.

"The thing that the Mind Flayer left in my leg was moving around, so Jonathan cut it open and I pulled it out, using my powers, but this caused them to seemingly disappear." El added.

"Your powers?" Mr Clarke asked. El nodded in reply.

"Jim, Joyce and I got to the mall after Alexei was tragically killed and went down to the Russian base. We were about to destroy the machine when a Russian agent who'd been following us attacked Jim." Murray began, when Joyce interrupted.

"Hop threw him into the machine but was trapped behind a wall of electricity which would've killed him. He smiled and nodded and I turned the two keys needed to blow the machine up. That was the last we saw of him."

"While that happened, the Mind Flayer found us in the mall. Billy got El and was about to sacrifice her to the Mind Flayer when El pleaded with him, and he ended up sacrificing himself to save her life." Mike finished as he looked to his right. A single tear streamed down Max's face before Murray began to talk.

"Last night, Dustin brought me that Heathkit that you fixed up, and this afternoon we received a Russian signal that said something about them finding an American on the other side of a portal. We want to do a rescue mission, because we think it's Jim."

Scott looked on in shock. "What do you need me for?" He asked.

"We need you to get the kids out of school for a couple weeks, and we think you, as a scientist, might be a valuable asset to us when we rescue Jim and destroy the Russians once and for all." Joyce told him.

"Well... I suppose I could say we're on an AV club trip, Principal Coleman really doesn't care anymore. What's the plan?"

"We're gonna drive up to Anchorage in Alaska, should take about two to three days. We're gonna take a boat across to Russia, which is another two days or so. We plan to leave on Monday, meaning tomorrow we need to stockpile enough stuff for ten to fourteen days.

We also need weapons for when we go up against the Russians. That means guns, bats, anything. And we need a boat." Murray said. Steve and Dustin exchanged smiles at the word "bats", but the second Murray mentioned a boat, Steve offered his.

"My parents have a fairly large yacht, I could probably ask to borrow it to impress a my new boss."

"You don't have a new boss." Robin laughed.

"They don't know that."

Nancy looked at Jonathan and Jonathan looked back, reading her face immediately. He shook his head and made a mental note to go back to Hunting & Camping for more supplies.

The group sat awkwardly before Murray spoke up. "Well then, everyone meet back here at 8pm tomorrow. Steve, you're probably gonna wanna stay here or something tonight."

"Yeah, Robin told me."

Suddenly, Mike's head snapped to Nancy, "Aren't you supposed to be at work?"

Her eyes widened, "Oh shit!" She got up, but sat back down. "I guess this could count as a family emergency. Jonathan's mom's boyfriend counts, right?" She said, jokingly. There was another awkward silence before Murray got up, signalling for Joyce, El and Will to get up with him, but Will didn't.

"I think I'll stay here for tonight Murray. I have some friends to catch up with." He explained. Mike expected El to stay too, but she got up and followed Joyce and Murray out, after Joyce said goodbye to Will, of course. Next to go was Robin, who was joined by Scott, as his ride had just left. Jonathan and Nancy went upstairs to her room, where they remained for the rest of the night. Lucas and Max left so that Lucas's parents wouldn't get confused as to where they were. Since Billy died, Neil had become more abusive, so Dr Owens stepped in to help Max, and she was taken in by Lucas's parents as per his request, though sometimes she stayed with her mom, who had divorced Neil.

Steve, Mike, Dustin and Will stayed downstairs, catching up.

"What's it like in Illinois?" Mike asked.

"It's good. We've really missed you guys over there, all of us. But mom couldn't stay here with all that's happened to her; frankly neither could me and El. At least now we don't have to worry about everyone we know living in Russia." Will told him.

The four laughed and stayed up for hours talking about times when they weren't in mortal danger. Dustin decided to go home around midnight, at which point the other three decided it was also time to sleep. Steve offered to sleep in the basement while Will and Mike slept upstairs, because sleeping in the basement with one or both of them made him feel too much like a pedophile. Mike offered his room, but Steve refused and told him to go upstairs. The pair obliged and Will set out a sleeping bag on Mike's bedroom floor. Before long, the two were asleep, since Mike was still tired after being interrupted from his fourteen hour sleep that afternoon and Will was up early to go to the mall with Jonathan and El.

It was 8:26 when Mike woke up the next morning. Will was already awake at the end of his bed, reading that Stephen King book from last year, the one about the clown. "Hey." He said groggily, causing Will to look up and beam.

"Hey. I was wondering when you'd get up."

"What time did you get up?"

"Like six. I'm practically programmed to get up that early at the weekend, considering me, El and Jonathan are constantly going out."

"Right. We've gotta go get the others, it's gonna be a long day of stockpiling."

"Probably..." Will put his book down after marking the page he was on. "I'm just not sure this is all real. I didn't think I'd see you again for a long, long time. And the Upside Down still being a problem for me? It feels almost too much, y'know?"

Mike hesitated. "I feel you. I didn't sleep for a good couple days over the anniversary of you going missing. The Upside Down still haunts us, all of us. Nancy still gets occasional flashbacks to when she was in there herself. But if we don't do this, the world could end. Every second we spend not shutting that gate is another second the Mind Flayer has to get into our world. C'mon Will, let's finish this." He got out of bed and reached out for Will's hand, who grabbed it back. Mike pulled him up and realise that Will too was wearing only boxers. "We should probably get dressed first though."

Just fifteen minutes after he woke up, Mike was already on his way to the basement, to wake up Steve, knowing full well that Steve was gonna have to help them stockpile. He was surprised to have the basement door fling into his face, as Steve came out, ready to start the day. Will came to the top of the stairs at the sound of Mike's face hitting the door then hitting the floor and couldn't help but rush down to make sure he was okay. Mike assured both him and Steve that he was good and laughed as he got up, causing Will to chuckle slightly too. The three got into Steve's car and Mike called Lucas on the Supercom to tell him, Dustin and Max to go food shopping while they went looking for stuff to camp with.

"If we fill the backseats of the cars with as much stuff as possible we can fit two people in each car." Mike said to break the silence after turning the radio off. "The issue is, we only have five cars, but there's thirteen of us. We've got Murray's car, Robin's car, Joyce's car, Jonathan's and this one."

"What about Nancy's?" Will asked.

"Stolen."

"Me and Robin can take this one with the boat on a trailer on the back." Steve suggested, before Mike interrupted.

"How big is this boat, by the way?"

"Just about big enough for all of us to be on top and all the other stuff to be below deck, with a little bit of sleeping space."

"So it's not quite a luxury yacht?"

"No, but we couldn't get a giant yacht all the way to Alaska with our cars, could we?"

"I guess not."

"Anyway, if me and Robin take this one, Murray and Dustin could take Murray's. Jonathan and Nancy will probably want to go together in Jonathan's. Joyce's new car is pretty big so they might be able to fit a third person in the back, so her, Mr Clarke and El can go together."

"I thought El might come with me."

"Don't bullshit yourself Wheeler!" Steve responded, surprising Mike, "I saw the way you two looked at each other last night. The love was there, but only in the same way that the love is there for Dustin, Max and Lucas. The spark's gone, isn't it?"

Mike was awestruck. How did Steve know? Was the spark really gone, as he had thought last night? **Why hadn't he mentioned Will?** "How did you know?" he asked, without thinking.

"When you live with Murray Bauman, you pick up certain tricks. Jonathan and Nancy experienced Murray's skills first hand, ask them."

The silence that followed was quickly interrupted by Will, finally talking.

"My mom's car can fit the three of them, which leaves Robin's car, which Lucas and Max will want to take. Lucas can't wait to get his hands behind the wheel of anyone's car, and Max will want to be with him. That leaves the two of us."

"Can either of you drive?" Steve asked.

"Yeah, I can." The two answered in unison.

"Then I have an idea."

Steve pulled into his old driveway and opened the garage to reveal the Toddfather, restored to its condition before Steve rammed it into Billy's car.

"I thought you lost this after Starcourt." Mike exclaimed.

"No, I convinced Owens to let me keep it, and I got Dustin to help me restore it as best we could. I think it came out pretty good."

"Pretty good? This looks brand new!" Will told him, "Nice job man!"

"It was nothing, really. Now might be a good time to get this back to yours, along with the boat. There's some paper in the car, I'll write a little message, my parents won't go looking for either of them."

After Steve wrote his message, he followed Mike driving the Toddfather, with Will in the passenger seat, while pulling along the boat back to the Wheeler household. Upon his arrival, he saw that Nancy and Jonathan had already left, presumably to get more weapons. He got out and pulled something out from the trunk of his car, his trusty old nail bat. After he used it to save Jonathan from the Demogorgon and then the kids from the Demodogs, he made sure to keep it on him at all times. Just in case. They walked into the house and got three bowls of Chex before heading back out. It was a long day ahead, and they were acutely aware of how much it was gonna cost. But it was for the greater good. The greater good wasn't gonna pay off Steve's mortgage when he eventually got a house though. He brushed that thought away and got back in the car. "Where next?"

4. Chapter 4: The Road Trip

Why did she feel nothing? It was the first time seeing him in a year, but she felt nothing when she kissed him. They used to be inseparable, but now she thought it might be gone. She didn't let it show though, and followed him to the basement, accompanied by Joyce, that bald guy from Starcourt and that teacher who thought she was Swedish. As she sat, listening to everyone explain what happened to them between 1983 and 1985, the number one thing on her mind was still *why didn't it feel right?* She was sure she loved him, but the spark was gone. "I grew up in a lab where I was trained to use my abilities for bad things. I was forced to kill animals and people." She chimed in, not really thinking about its relevance, she just knew the attention was on her. Everyone continued to talk and explain everything to Scott but she just couldn't get her mind off of the kiss.

It was exactly 8pm the next night when Murray, El, Joyce and Mr Clarke turned up at Mike's house, Murray bearing an incredibly disappointed look.

"What the fuck is that boat?" He asked.

"Just about big enough for everything, and us. It's a tight squeeze, but we can fit." Steve, who had answered the door, responded. "Good to see you guys."

"Yeah, whatever." Murray muttered under his breath, pushing past him and going to the basement. Joyce smiled at Steve and followed, El in tow. Mr Clarke was the last one in the doorway.

"You coming in Mr Clarke?" Steve asked, laughing.

"Please, Steve, call me Scott. You aren't my student anymore." He chuckled before sighing, "I just... It's crazy that this is happening, y'know?"

"Believe me, I know what you're talking about. I was just trying to apologise for a fight I had with Jonathan before Nancy pointed a gun at me and the Demogorgon almost killed us."

"Wow..." Scott simply said, before he shook Steve's hand, "Good to see you again Steve."

Murray, El, Joyce and Scott were actually the last to arrive at Mike's place, and so everybody was already down in the basement, showing off what they'd bought for the trip. As Steve walked down, he saw Mike and Will showing all of the camping stuff that the three of them had bought during the day. There were seven tents which could just about fit two people each, along with pegs and hammers, which both could be used as weapons. Just before Nancy and Jonathan showed off their haul from Hunting & Camping, Steve grabbed his bat and started to talk about it. "This baby has gone up against both the Demogorgon and the Demodogs. It's old but it's never failed me, so I'm sure it'll be useful against some Russian guards." He pointed at Jonathan and then Nancy with it, "It even saved this couple's lives."

"Thanks for that Steve, but that courage could've been from the blood loss after I beat the shit out of you." Jonathan laughed, and Steve shot him a glare before smirking. Next up was Jonathan and Nancy, who showed off the pistols, rifles and bear traps that they'd bought from Hunting & Camping. Then, there was Scott, El, Joyce and Murray, who put in a load of Russian guns they had taken after the battle of Starcourt. Lastly, everyone showed off their food hauls, and proceeded to get ready to pack everything into the cars. Steve, Mike and Will demonstrated their car arrangements from that morning and after what felt like hours, they'd just about managed to fit everybody into the cars, though Scott didn't seem to like how little space he had in the back of Joyce's car, but it was the best option, seeing as Joyce knew him best and would be able to explain the last four years in more detail and better than anyone else could. It was then that Nancy offered everybody else to stay at the house so they can leave instantly the next morning, which Scott questioned.

"What about Karen, Ted and Holly?" he asked, "Won't they come home?"

"No, they're in Mexico for another month or so. They offered us to come but we declined because we'd prefer to have some more independence than sit in a hot hotel down south for literal months." Mike said in response.

"I see..."

Murray woke with a start at 6am the next morning, laid back in the La-Z-Boy. He dropped the legs of the chair down, and stood up, stretching as he looked around the living room. Joyce was splayed across the couch while Scott slept on the ground in a sleeping bag that Mike, Steve and Will had bought. He clapped, startling the other two into waking up, "Let's get going people, we need to be out early to maximise time on the road and minimise the amount of days this is gonna take!" He shouted, loud enough for everybody to hear. From the basement he could hear Steve and Robin start moving and up above the kids were moving too. Murray insisted that they leave immediately, which they mostly followed, except for Mike, who took time to grab some extra food before running out to the car, locking his front door behind him. He ran round to the left of the Toddfather and hopped in. Every car was fitted with a radio to talk to each other and inform of problems so nobody was surprised when Murray tested them out. "Everybody hear me?"

"Yes, we hear you, Murray." Steve responded from inside his car, and the others responded similarly.

"Then let's go."

Will pulled out a cassette tape and put it into the tape deck as Mike started the car. As everyone else pulled away in front of them, the pair heard the opening to Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now and Mike smiled as Will sang along. He handed him a Hershey's bar that he'd taken from the kitchen and pulled out behind Steve and Robin.

Hours later, the pair were heading through Wisconsin, listening to Holding Out for a Hero. "We should play this when we rescue Hop." Mike joked, making Will laugh. The two were laughing for a while before Mike spoke up again, his train of thought moving from Hopper to Eleven. "What happened to El, man?"

"I don't know... she started hanging out with some ex-criminal called Kali. Really changed her."

"Clearly. She looks like she did when you were possessed."

"I barely remember." Will half joked. His face fell slightly at the reminder of his troubled early teens, so Mike shut himself up. There was an awkward silence just as Bonnie Tyler finished, but it was interrupted when You Don't Mess Around With Jim came on. They turned to each other and Will told Mike, "No, *this* is what we should play when we rescue Hop." Mike snorted and turned back to the road.

"I've really missed you man." He told him, "I mean, really missed you."

"I missed you too, Mike."

Steve sat in the passenger seat of his own car while Robin drove through North Dakota. The two had swapped when everybody stopped for a break somewhere in Minnesota. He looked at the wing mirrors and saw the Toddfather trailing behind. "They better not fuck my car up." He told Robin, "I put two years of work into getting that thing running again. I can't afford to let it go again."

"It's gonna be okay, dingus. They're not kids anymore Steve, let it go."

"I've had to save their lives multiple times. When that happens, you start seeing them as your children."

"What?" Robin laughed, "You do know I also helped save them, right?"

"Yeah, I know. But I took beatings for those kids. I got my shit kicked in to protect them from Billy and then the Demodogs. I'm just worried for them. And my car."

"Don't worry, dingus, they can handle themselves now."

Steve sighed. "I guess."

"What, did you like being their protector?"

"Kind of. It was nice to have people to look after. I guess that's why we're such good friends, especially me and Dustin."

"Getting stuck in a Russian base with someone will make them your best friend. Especially the near death situations."

"Getting stuck in a mall with a thirty foot flesh monster with anyone will make them your best friend. We could've been in there with Tommy H and I probably would've become his best friend again."

"Probably."

"Mike better know how to drive, else-"

"He's dead. They all know how your rules work, dingus. They'll be fine."

"Just making sure."

Scott, Joyce and Eleven sat in Joyce's car. Scott was being mildly crushed by everything packed in, but at this point he'd learned to ignore the pain in his arm. They drove through Estevan, hoping for a hostel or hotel to appear; else they'd have to sleep in the cars. Of course, everywhere was booked, so they found a small area to park the cars. With the cold temperature, Mike and Will were forced to put a tent up over the Toddfather to try and keep in some heat. Joyce laughed to herself quietly as she saw the pair attempt to set up a tent on a car. It wasn't long before she drifted off to sleep and enjoyed a nice five hours or so of it.

Will woke at 6am sharp to the sound of Murray's car starting and a face full of tent. Clearly it had collapsed in the night, though the heat of the remnants of the tent and, more importantly, Mike's body had kept him just warm enough to not feel like he was being hunted by the Demogorgon again. He sat up and moved the tent off of him and Mike. There was close to no light yet Dustin was waking everybody up as Murray started his car. Mike stirred as Will grabbed the keys from next to the pedals. He sat himself up into the driver's seat, surprisingly awake considering the mere four and a half hours of sleep he got. "Everybody up!" He heard Murray shouting, "We have a twenty hour day ahead of us!" Clearly he was unsatisfied with Dustin's work. He turned and saw Mike finish packing the tent away.

"Hey." He said. Mike turned and laughed.

"Wow. You really stole the driving job from me."

"I missed it. Besides, you drove for eighteen hours yesterday; it might be a good idea for you to rest."

"Only if I drive tomorrow."

"Did you hear Murray? I will gladly let you drive tomorrow." He grabbed a second cassette tape from his bag. "But today is my day." He popped yesterday's tape out and put today's in. Steve and Robin started their car in front and started pulling away.

"That's our cue to go." Mike said, causing Will to pull away as the first song started playing.

"Shot through the heart, and you're to blame!" Jon Bon Jovi sang, before Will joined in. "Darlin' you give love, a bad name."

"Why can't I drive?" Dustin complained to Murray as they drove through Edmonton. "I have a license!"

"Because you're the navigator."

"But can't you navigate?"

"Probably. But I'd rather drive."

"I hate this."

Lucas and Max sat in Robin's car, following right behind Murray as they drove round the outskirts of Grande Prairie. "God, how much longer? I feel like I've been behind this fuckin' wheel for half a day." Max asked.

"Murray said it was a twenty hour day, and that was about fourteen hours ago. So probably another six hours."

"You've got to be kidding."

That's when they heard Dustin's voice over the radio. "Hey guys! It's Bard here. I just thought you might want to know what Bald Eagle's just told me."

"Basically, we're gonna stop in Fort Nelson tonight and then we're going straight to Anchorage. It's a twenty-five hour drive." Murray chimed in.

"Over." Dustin added.

Max and Lucas turned to each other in shock. "Twenty-five hours?" They shouted in unison, knowing that neither Murray nor Dustin would hear them. Lucas started talking into the radio. "Do you want us to swap drivers halfway through? Over."

"That would be a good idea. Over." Dustin said.

"Jeez, okay. Over and out." He put the radio back down.

"Holy shit..." Max whispered. "I'm stuck in a car with you for twenty-five hours."

Once again, Will awoke with a face full of tent, warmed mainly by Mike's body heat. This time, it was 5am, so Will had only enjoyed three hours of sleep. Murray was starting his car and Will shook Mike to wake him up.

"Already?" the groggy teen asked.

"Yup."

"God damn it. Tell me the second it's been twelve and a half hours, there's no way I'm driving a moment longer than you today."

"Yeah, I figured." He smiled weakly and sat in the passenger seat. Mike put the tent back and sat down, grabbing Will's third and final mix tape. Will was soothed back to sleep by the sweet sound of Africa.

He awoke just past half way, as Murray came over the radio.

"Everybody pull over, we're swapping drivers. We're a little past half way. Over and out."

Mike turned to Will, who was groggily grabbing some of the extra food Mike had bought from one of the bags. "You heard the man. Swap over."

Will groaned, he was still pretty tired and now he had to drive for twelve and a half hours. At least Mike would finally get some sleep. They pulled over and swapped seats. Within seconds of pulling away again, Mike was sound asleep. Will was amazed he hadn't killed the two of them while driving. He looked over at him while he slept. He seemed peaceful, almost happy. He looked cute. *Wait, fuck, that's gay.* Nevermind. Will wasn't gay. Definitely not for Mike. Nope. Not Will. Dustin, on the other hand...

Finally, Murray pulled over. It was 6am. They had finally arrived in Anchorage, Alaska. As he pulled up next to them, Will saw Robin hit Steve on the arm to wake him up. He decided to be gentler with Mike. He put a hand on his shoulder and lightly shook, which roused the tall boy. "We here already?"

"Unfortunately."

"Then let's get this boat into the water."

Despite the protests of Joyce, the boat slid into the water with Will, Mike, Lucas, Dustin and Max on top of it. They laughed together as Murray and Steve struggled to moor the boat so they could load everything on. Before long however, the pair were struggling to free the boat and jump on so they could make their '*stealthy*', as Dustin put it, entrance into Russia. As Steve began to steer, with Murray giving him specific directions, the Party sat down together. "Are we really about to do this? Break into Russia?" Max asked.

"Looks like it." Dustin said flatly. "But there's nobody better equipped to do it than us."

"Well except for the military, anybody with any amount of gun training, the Russians, Brenner, that Terminator looking guy, tha-

Lucas began.

"I think we get it, Lucas." Mike told him.

"We're screwed." Will whispered.

"Probably." Mike said. "But at least we're screwed together."

That's when El joined them. Mike looked away awkwardly, remembering the conversation between him and Steve a few days before hand, before turning back and smiling. "Hey El!"

"Hey Mike."

The six were just starting to catch up when they heard Joyce call. Walking below deck, they saw everything (bar most of the camping equipment) packed in. There was just enough room for everybody to sleep but not much more. For now though, it was time to eat, and Joyce had prepared a delicious meal of canned foods. That was it. Nobody cared though, they were all so, so hungry. Murray's insistence on rationing was tearing up their stomachs so the chance to eat as much as they did that night was irresistible.

"So, El, have your powers come back at all yet?" Mike asked offhandedly.

"Only when I have really strong emotions or I really need them. I feel like I've lost all control." She replied, stuffing her face with beans. "That's why I'm working with Kali to get them back." Everyone looked at her, confused, "Kali's more than just an ex-con. She's one of Brenner's experiments too. I went to her in November '84 to meet her. She killed people she didn't like, but clearly something turned her to good. Now the two of us work together to get my powers back to fully controllable. She's the person who gave me this bitchin' look the first time and she gave it to me again." She watched as everything clicked in all of their heads and smiled. "It's been fun to have a friend like me."

A few hours later, Mike pulled El aside, to talk to her in private. They looked at each other at the side of the boat, Jonathan and Nancy

being frankly too cutesy with each other over the other side while Steve, Robin and Murray piloted the vessel. "Listen, El, I need to tell you something." Mike began nervously.

"Me too..." El looked down to her feet.

"Wanna say it at the same time?"

She looked back up, "Sure."

"Okay, on three. One... Two... Three!"

"Ithinkthesparkisgone." The two rushed out in unison.

"Oh thank god." Mike breathed after a second of silence. "I thought it was gonna be something really awkward." He laughed to himself before sticking out his hand. "Friends then?"

She grabbed his hand and shook. "Friends."

5. Chapter 5: The Prisoner

November 16th, 1987. Kamchatka.

The boat landed at midday. It was fucking freezing. However, Will stepped off the boat with confidence. They all had a job to do and a police officer to rescue. They knew that they had a short walk before getting to the base, so they decided to camp out and hide while they came up with a plan of attack. Looking at the area, they saw heavy fortification and a lot of guards. They knew that the guard count would decrease that night, as nobody ever expects a night attack. Will thought long and hard, before an idea popped into his head. "I've got something."

"That's crazy." Mr Clarke told him.

"Are you kidding? We're breaking into a Russian base to rescue some random cop and shut down a portal to another dimension which contained some Audrey II looking mother fucker and a giant gas spider. It doesn't get crazier than that." Retorted Mike.

"He has a point." Lucas added.

"Besides, Mike and I already thoroughly planned this out on the drive over here. We know what we're doing. As long as you can teach us how to speak some Russian, just a couple phrases." Will argued, pointing at Murray.

"What do you need to know?" He asked, rather reluctantly.

It was midnight by the time they struck. Having caught up on sleep and food, they set out to take out a Russian base by themselves. Once everybody was in position, Mike and Will walked out from their hiding place and into the view of the four guards out front, who aimed their guns at the duo.

"Подождите!" Will shouted. "Мы не имеем в виду никакого вреда!"

"Мы - артисты, которые здесь, чтобы развлекать вас." Mike added.

The confused lowering of their weapons signalled the time for Will to press play on his stereo.

"Morning! Today's forecast calls for blue skies!" Will called out. Mike faked playing along with the guitar while Will sang. "Sun is shinin' in the sky, there ain't a cloud in sight."

The guards were in awe at the show they were watching. *Что это, ебля черт подери, такое?*

"See how the sun shines brightly, in the city, on the streets where once was pity. Mr Blue Sky is living here today, hey hey."

As the chorus began, Will signalled for everyone to begin. Nancy and Jonathan ran out of their hiding spot to his right with rifles drawn. Each took out a soldier while Steve and Robin ran out from the other side, Steve holding *the bat* and Robin empty handed. She took out a soldier with some well placed punches to the face while Steve kicked the other in the nuts and bashed him over the head with the non lethal side of the bat. All the while, Mike and Will, now accompanied by Lucas, Max, El and Dustin, sang the chorus to Mr Blue Sky. Finally, Will paused the stereo and picked it up, fast forwarding to a certain song. As Murray, Mr Clarke and Joyce rejoined everyone else, they started talking again.

"Well, it's official. That was the craziest thing I've ever done." Lucas said, eyes wide.

"Are you kidding? You didn't just kick a Russian soldier in the nuts." Steve joked.

"Are *you* kidding? You didn't just perform some fucking ELO live for said Russian soldiers." Will retorted.

"Language, William." Mr Clarke said out of instinct.

"Sorry Mr Clarke," Will laughed as Mr Clarke went red with embarrassment.

"God, I haven't had to say that one in years."

After apprehending a Russian guard with ease, they forced him to take them to "The American". He unlocked the cell and was promptly knocked unconscious by Murray. From inside they heard a voice. "So, you're finally gonna take me to die?" It was an unmistakeable voice. It was him. They pulled the door open and saw a man who'd clearly been fed well and worked out quite a bit on the floor, with a long greying beard and ridiculously long hair.

"No... I was thinking maybe I could take you to Enzo's. How's seven sound?" Joyce asked, standing in the doorway.

Chief Jim Hopper sat on the floor of the Russian prison. Day 864. He heard the door unlock and two loud bangs. He assumed it was time. "So, you're finally gonna take me to die?" He looked up and saw three familiar silhouettes in the doorway.

"No..." One of them said. "I was thinking maybe I could take you to Enzo's. How's seven sound?"

Joyce?

His eyes filled with tears instantly, and he jumped to his feet, running to Joyce and hugging her. He let out sobs as he realised what was happening. He was being rescued. Finally. He looked to the left and saw the six kids plus Scott, El at the front, tears welling up into her eyes. "El?" He asked, shocked.

"Dad... I missed you." She joined the hug with Joyce and the three sobbed together. To his right, stood Murray and those twenty year olds who had helped so many times. Murray pulled himself into the hug. "It's good to see you Jim." After what felt like hours, Jim pulled back.

"They have another drill up and working. I think there's a... fuck I forgot the word. You know what I mean, one of the Upside Down things."

"The Mind Flayer?" Will asked.

"Yeah, that's the one. He's an execution tool. We need to close that gate again and cut it off from the home world." He noticed the stereo Will was holding. "You got anything by Jim Croce on there?"

"What do you think is loaded up in there?" He smiled and pressed play. The sweet sound of You Don't Mess Around With Jim was almost enough to make Jim cry again.

"Nice one kid."

They followed Hopper through the base, fighting against Russian soldiers as they went downstairs to where he said the monster was. They were sneaking past to get to the drill when another soldier stopped them. In a final attempt to prevent the group from destroying the plans, he opened the gate and cage to their right. Out crawled a Demodog, who then stood up on its hind legs and screamed, having smelled the dried blood that covered everybody by this point. "HOLY SHIT!" Mr Clarke shouted, while the Party, minus Max, turned to each other.

"Demogorgon." They said together.

"Shut down the drill, we've got this!" Mike shouted to Jim, who was about to retaliate before he realised that these weren't the same kids from two and a half years ago.

"You heard the kid, let's go!" Jim shouted as he ran off with Joyce, while Murray, Scott, Nancy and Jonathan handled the incoming guards.

"We don't have to kill it, just hold it off until those two shut the gate." Will said. "Shouldn't be too hard, right?"

That's when Steve was knocked to the ground by the Demogorgon, who proceeded to open it's mouth, ready to chow down, when it was pulled back by Robin and the kids.

"You aren't dying on my watch Harrington!" Dustin told him.

"You should pay more attention next time, dingus." Robin added.

Steve was too busy screaming to respond, but the Demogorgon was still on top. They couldn't get him off. That was when Jonathan turned around and saw the scene unfolding. He ran to them and swung his rifle, hitting the monster straight in the mouth and sending it flying back. He extended a hand and pulled Steve up. "You looked like you needed help. Consider us even."

Steve chuckled slightly as Jonathan ran back to Nancy's side. Turning back to the fight before him, he saw Max on the back of the Demogorgon while Robin, Mike, Lucas and Dustin wailed on it. Meanwhile, in the corner, El was freaking out.

She couldn't believe it. The monster that she set free, the one that she almost died to kill, was back. And now she couldn't stop it. She hadn't learned to control her powers again, she was useless. She sat in the corner as the world moved in slow motion. She watched Steve laugh as Jonathan ran away, and she saw Max launch herself onto the monster. Then, she saw Will in front of her. "El?" he asked, "El? Are you okay?" The lack of a response was the same as a no to Will, which he was right about. She felt tears run down her cheeks as Will knelt down in front of her. "Hey, it's okay." She heard, "We can do this."

She shook her head. "No... I can't control my powers. We're hopeless."

To her shock, Will laughed. "Do you really think that little of us? We can do this El, but we need your help. The party needs this."

"But I have no control-"

"We don't need control, we just need powers." Will interrupted. She pushed herself up and smiled at Will. "No control."

"Yeah, go batshit."

"Bat shit?"

"Crazy."

The Demogorgon flew across the room, Max flying off of its back. Perhaps Will's speech was too good, as almost instantly El collapsed

and fell unconscious.

"Oh fuck. Keep it away from El!" Will shouted. "She's out."

"I've got her" Steve said, running to them, "Hold off that fucking thing."

Jonathan got back to Nancy and took cover behind the free wall. He turned out and shot a Russian soldier in the foot before going back. Steve ran up behind him, holding the unconscious Eleven. "I haven't heard a scream that high pitched since Will was a baby." He told him.

"Yeah, fuck you Byers. If you had that thing in your face like that you'd be screaming too."

"I have had that thing in my face, and I definitely didn't scream like that."

"He isn't lying." Nancy said, stepping out and shooting at another soldier.

"Can you three shut the fuck up and do something?!" Murray shouted from a small inlet in the hall. "Take their weapons, they're better than rifles." An arm pointed out to the bodies and writhing Russian soldiers. Jonathan and Nancy ran up and took them, running forward and firing as more came down into the hall.

Joyce followed Hopper to the drill. "I came out of here a while after. Some soldiers came in and took me. If I remember correctly, the drill is right..." they turned a corner and in front was an even bigger version of the drill Joyce had seen two and a half years earlier. "Here." Hopper finished.

"Holy shit..." She whispered, turning to Hopper. "Let's end it for real this time."

The Demogorgon was back in full force, now smelling the blood from El's nose. It recognised the blood and was out to get it. Will pulled his fist back and punched the beast in the, thankfully closed, face. It

staggered to the side and was hit in the other side by a left hook from Max, which sent it falling into Mike, who kned it where it's balls would be before going for an uppercut. It fell to the floor and was jumped by Robin, Lucas and Dustin, who wailed on it. Suddenly, it screeched, and the three jumped back. It grabbed the three and threw them away before taking out Mike and Max, throwing them to the side. Angry, Will charged it, but was scratched and injured by the claws as it threw him away. Attracted by the blood, the Demogorgon came over and stood over Will, who was laying on the floor, bleeding fairly severely from a scratch to the chest. The cold of the concrete sent Will back to a time he'd rather forget.

November 12th 1983. Castle Byers.

"Will?" he heard the voice ask. "Your mom, she's coming for you."

"H-H-Hurry." He managed to say.

"Just- Just hold on a little longer. Will? Will!?" was the last thing he heard. He hadn't even been able to open his eyes.

He heard the footsteps of the Demogorgon. He sat up in the castle and looked around, terrified and freezing. Then, the walls burst and he saw the monster in its full form. It screeched at him. He screamed back.

"GET OFF MY FRIEND YOU PIRANHA PLANT MOTHER FUCKER!"

He didn't remember that.

Suddenly, he was back in the Russian base, tears streaming down his face, and the Demogorgon reeling back. Mike stood in front of him, Steve's bat in hand. He was panting as the monster fell to the floor and stopped moving.

"Holy shit, did you kill it?" Dustin asked, excited.

"Probably not. The portal is probably just shut." Lucas told him. Mike turned around to Will and saw three gashes across his chest.

"Oh fuck, Will!" He ran over, "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, it's just... God, I feel like I'm going crazy with all this

happening again."

"Well, I guess we're going crazy together." He smiled; making Will smile through the pain. Mike offered his hand, and Will took it, clutching at his stomach as his best friend pulled him to his feet. "We need to get you some thing to stop the blood."

"That would help, I'm getting faint."

"Shit, really?"

"Not really, but I'm going to real soon."

Mike laughed slightly, "Asshole. You had me worried." He pulled off the sweatshirt he was wearing to prevent against the Kamchatka cold and gave it to Will. "Put pressure on it."

"Don't you want it?"

"And risk you bleeding out? I'll pass on the sweater; let's just get to the boat real quick."

Hopper and Joyce ran back into the room and saw a dead Demogorgon, alongside the kids, Robin and Steve, who was holding El as she started to wake back up. Hopper ran over and Steve handed her to him. He embraced her and felt her weakly hug him back as Joyce ran over to Will, who was bent over, arm around Mike's shoulder as he clutched a sweatshirt to his chest. "What happened?" she asked, obviously alarmed.

"Demogorgon hit me. But I'm good. Nothing major. Mike lent me his sweater to stop the blood; we can sort it out when we're back at the boat."

Jonathan ran back through the corridor. "Guys I think we have a window, let's go!" Hopper picked El up to no objections and the team ran through, once again following Hopper back to his cell. They then followed Murray as he led them out through the front.

"Did we take out the entire base?" Mr Clarke asked as they ran outside to see nobody but the four bodies out front.

"Looks like it." Murray responded. They ran out and back to the boat. Steve set off right as they heard distant helicopter blades. Meanwhile, Mike, Will, Jonathan and Joyce went below deck to tend to Will's wound. He pulled away the sweatshirt and winced as the air hit the now dry cuts in his chest. Joyce almost vomited at the sight but bandaged him up anyway.

"You're probably gonna want to wash that sweater when you get home." Will told Mike.

"Yeah, I don't wanna look like a serial killer whenever I wear this." He laughed in response. "I'm glad you're okay man." The two hugged as they sat down.

On the top deck, Steve was going as fast as he could.

"HURRY THE FUCK UP!" Murray shouted at him.

"Be quiet, I don't think they've seen us." Steve responded, and he was right. Somehow, the Russian helicopter didn't see the boat speeding away into the night.

A few days later, they moored up, back in Anchorage. The cars were still there, but there was a man in front. None other than Dr Owens stood in front of them, and he clapped as they stepped off the boat. "Well done!" he said, "You broke into a Russian base an-

"And shut down another portal to the Upside Down, rescuing a national hero in the process. You're welcome Owens." Just then, Hopper walked out from under the deck.

"Holy shit..." Owen muttered at the appearance.

"Yeah. Holy shit." Murray said, getting back into his car. "You wanna come back with us? We have enough room."

"I... I'm good."

"Well, could you help us get the boat back onto the trailer behind my car?" Steve asked, "I need to take it back home."

Joyce, Hopper and the Owens had talked about getting Joyce's new place paid off so that she could move back to Hawkins with Hopper because they rescued the world again. It would be a couple of days before they moved back into Hawkins in a new house, but Hopper offered Joyce to stay with him while Will, El and Jonathan stayed at Mike and Nancy's. And that was that. Will and El stayed in Mike's room for the next few days while Nancy and Jonathan stayed together. Finally, everything was peaceful, and everything had returned to normal. What could possibly go wrong?

6. Chapter 6: The Gayening

"It's not my fault you don't like girls!"

He looked cute.

"I've really missed you man. I mean, really missed you."

Wait, fuck, that's gay.

"At least we're screwed together."

Will definitely wasn't gay.

"GET OFF MY FRIEND YOU PIRANHA PLANT MOTHER FUCKER!"

Definitely not for Mike.

"Well, I guess we're going crazy together."

Nope.

"And risk you bleeding out? I'll pass on the sweater."

Not Will.

"I'm glad you're okay man."

Will Byers was gay for Mike Wheeler. Will Byers hated that he was gay for Mike Wheeler. For his entire life, he was put down by people for being a "fairy" and a "fag", since before he even knew what those words meant. Will had known that he was gay for what, five years now? Or at least had his suspicious. That's the thing with being trapped alone in an alternate universe for a week, you get a lot of time to think.

He remembered laying in Castle Byers, quietly singing Should I Stay or Should I Go and thinking. Thinking about everything he regretted. It wasn't long before it would eventually get him. He was all alone. He wished he'd said a proper goodbye to everyone. To mom, to Jonathan, to Dustin, to Lucas. To Mike. Oh God, Mike. The thought of

Mike made him cry. It was only when he lost him that he realised that he was person he wanted. He shut his eyes as he heard something, and it was so cold that he couldn't open them again. Then there was the voice. His mom was coming. He knew then and there that he would have to tell Mike after he was out. But then the monster got him. And then he woke up in a hospital. And he couldn't tell him. He just couldn't.

He remembered being strapped to a chair, trapped in his own mind by the Mind Flayer. He heard Mike's voice tell him about the first time they met. Oh how he wished that he could tell him that saying "yes" was the best thing *he'd* ever done. But he couldn't. He could only tap morse code messages. Kind of a let down. He decided that the second he was free from the Mind Flayer, he would have to tell Mike. But then the monster took over completely. And then he woke up in a cabin. And he couldn't tell him. He just couldn't.

He thought that maybe it was the memory of the Upside Down that was giving him these thoughts, so he felt it was a good idea to move to Illinois, away from all the horrible memories. And it helped, he even got a girlfriend. Hell, he *lost his virginity to a girl*, how could he be gay?

Well, Freddie Mercury had a wife.

He remembered the night he lost his virginity. Well, he remembered more the conversation he had with himself. It was near midnight, and they were going away at it, when his brain spoke up.

This is cool and all, but wouldn't it be better if she was Mike?

Fuck off. This is good. He told it.

Is it though? Is this really what we want?

Shut it. We'll talk about this later.

And they did. After his girlfriend, at the time, fell asleep, him and his brain talked about it.

Did that really just happen? He asked.

Looks like it. His brain responded.

Was it necessary to ask if I wished she was Mike?

Yeah. It was.

Am... Am I really gay?

Well considering we got significantly more excited when we thought of Mike, I'd say probably.

Please don't refer to the two of us as we.

I'm surprised we even got it up.

Okay, that's enough of that.

Good idea. I'm hungry, fancy a midnight snack?

Sure, what do you want?

It wasn't an in depth conversation, but it got Will thinking. Was the Upside Down causing the gay thoughts, or was he some "queer" who loved to suck cock, as Troy had often called him?

He got scared when he started leaning towards the second one.

Seeing Mike for the first time in so long sent him into near meltdown. The lung crushing hug was not helped when his heart damn near exploded in his chest at feeling Mike's breath on his neck and hearing his voice shout "Will the Wise!" Then, of course, there was the next morning. Will never expected Mike to do something so inherently gay, but seeing the significantly taller boy pull him up wearing just boxers looked almost natural. Maybe too natural for a straight guy. Maybe he had hope left after all. Then it became blindingly obvious that Steve knew about his crush on Mike. From the looks Steve would give him while they were shopping for camping stuff to the conversation he had with Mike about being able to read anyone's love life from just their face, it was clear that Steve knew. So, when they were on the boat and Will pulled Steve aside, it was a relief when he told him that he didn't care. He remembered the conversation vividly. "Listen, Steve. I know you know."

"Know about what."

"Y'know... Him." He motioned to Mike with his head.

"Oooh, that. Yeah, I know."

"You can't tell anybody, okay? Not even my family know I'm... that way inclined, hell, I'm not even sure."

"I'm 100% sure. Like I said to Mike, living with Murray gives you super powers. Anyway kid, I really don't care. I'm proud of you for just being yourself."

"Th-thanks Steve. You're a life saver."

"Don't mention it. Just try and stay away from Murray, he'll definitely figure it out."

"I'll definitely figure what out?" Murray asked, walking below deck.

"Nothing." The pair said at once.

"Okay?" Murray said, confused. "Steve, get back up here and drive this thing, Dustin's getting tired."

"Sure thing Bauman." Steve said, following him as he turned back to Will and mouthed "it'll work out in the end. Trust me."

Of course, the car trips really solidified it. The literal days that the pair spent jamming out to a fuck ton of rock music, alongside their conversations where they caught up on the last year. It was then that he was sure. Will Byers was gay for Mike Wheeler.

It was early July, a *fucking hot* summer, but Mike didn't care. After officially splitting with El, he and Will had spent a long time together just being friends. They played DnD with the Party but also spent time together like they did before Max, before El, before Dustin and even before Lucas. But there were always those lingering thoughts in the back of his mind. *Why was the spark gone? What happened?* And, of course, *why hadn't Steve mentioned Will?* In the background of his life, Mike was having an identity crisis. At 17. *Who still doesn't know*

who they are at 17 years old? He asked himself every day. 16 is like, the cut off point, how the hell do you not know?

The truth was, he did know. He just didn't want to believe it.

He didn't want to believe that he was probably gay.

He didn't want to believe that he liked guys.

He didn't want to.

So he didn't.

He pushed it back. He just had to find the right girl, that's why the spark went, El wasn't the ri-

Will.

He forgot about Will.

Well not really. He could never forget about Will. He did forget about Steve's distinct lack of mentioning him.

Oh fuck, was he actually gay for his be-

No. Steve just didn't really know Will, that's probably why he didn't mention him.

Wait, Steve didn't really know Lucas either. Lucas wasn't a fan of Steve, so he tended to ignore Steve's approaches to friendship (which was a shame because Mike thought Lucas could actually be great friends with Steve, if he got the image of pre-'83 Steve out of his head). Steve probably knew Will better than he did Lucas.

No, Steve wouldn't be able to tell if he had a crush on Will before he could himself, right? Steve wouldn't know about how much Mike loved to watch Will smile, how often he found himself just staring at the boy, how he loved the mess that is his hair, how desperately he wanted to kiss his lips.

Fuck.

He didn't want to believe that he was definitely gay.

But he didn't have a choice.

It was only a matter of time before word got out. He had to get out of Hawkins quick. *Just one more year and we're done. We can move away and start a new life somewhere else.* He thought to himself.

Wait, who's "we"? Him and Will? No way. He was pretty sure Will was gay, but no way did he like him like that. It's not normal to be in love with your best friend.

But he didn't wanna live alone. Maybe Will *would* come with him to escape the town that haunts him and they could get an apartment and just be roommates. Like, just friends living together. Like a sitcom. Mike's situation would make a great sitcom, he could imagine the pitch now.

"Two best friends are living together. One is very much gay, but he hides it well, while the other is thought to be gay by most people, but nobody knows if he actually is. The gay one is madly in love with the unknown one, and desperately hopes to tell him the truth but never can."

Thinking about it, now might not be the best time for a show like that.

Wait did he just say he was "madly in love"?

Oh shit.

He was.

What the fuck was he gonna do?

7. Chapter 7: The Party

It was the summer of 1988 when Mike and Will went to the party. That would be the first drunken night of many, Mike was sure. And Will thought it could be fun too. After his family history with alcohol, specifically Lonnie, he'd mostly sworn off drinking, maybe except for the occasional beer with Mike that he'd managed to steal from Steve, or, more accurately, Steve had watched him take and decided not to say anything because he knew he did the same back when he was 17. They had hoped Nancy and Jonathan would escort them to their first party, but the two had moved to New York a while back to get a start on College life, albeit a bit late. Both had made it into NYU after applying and left shortly afterwards. So, they had to get their rides from elsewhere. Lucas and Max had been invited but declined for a date night, meaning Max's car was out of the question. Dustin still didn't have a car despite asking for one thousands of times and El spent a lot of time training with Kali, which Hopper was surprisingly supportive of. Will had expected him to refuse driving her to Illinois every other week, but she went. The only person they knew who was going to the party was, of course, Steve "The Hair" Harrington (and Robin because if she wasn't going then he wasn't). So, they had to ask Steve for a ride. Of course, he'd accepted and came to Mike's place, where Will and Dustin were waiting too, at about 11pm. Mike told Karen something about going to Steve's for a late night DnD session, as Steve had recently "gotten into it", and she didn't question it. She didn't much care about whatever Mike got up to at night anymore; she hadn't for a good couple years. As the three got into the back of Steve's car and said hi, Mike spoke up, "If my mom asks you anything about DnD talk about some medieval shit you know about."

"Why would your mom ask me about DnD?" Steve asked.

"That's what she thinks we're doing." Mike responded, sending Steve into a small fit of laughter.

"It's creative Wheeler, I'll give you that. Let's get going." He said, after recovering. The drive was short and not all too interesting. It was mainly Dustin, Steve and Robin talking while Will and Mike listened in. They didn't get the bond that the three had but Dustin looked

happy with it, so that was good. The three Party members were incredibly confused when Steve pulled up at his parents' place, with Dustin asking why they were there.

"What did you think someone from school conveniently invited both you three, a trio of kids somewhat despised by just about everyone, me, a man in his twenties who used to be the coolest guy in school but ended up working in an ice-cream store that 'burned down', and Robin, a girl in her twenties who wasn't considered a popular person and also worked at the same ice-cream store? No, dipshits, it's my party. We have got a load of kids from the school though."

"How'd you get other kids to come?" Dustin asked.

"I have my methods."

"So much for not feeling like a pedophile." Will muttered, snorting quietly. Steve pretended he didn't hear and got out.

"Come in then idiots." He told them, and they obliged, followed by Robin.

Walking into the house, the pair couldn't believe the size. Dustin and Robin had obviously been inside before, but Mike and Will hadn't. They'd only seen the outside when they went to get the Toddfather last year. They were even more awestruck when Steve put a beer into their hands and popped the caps. "Don't you dare tell your parents. You know what happens if you do." He smiled before popping the cap of his own beer. "Let's get this party started!"

"Steve we're the only ones here." Dustin told him.

"I meant pre-party. We have like an hour before anyone else gets here, to get fucked up before anyone else." Steve replied.

"Oh I don't really drink. Y'know, with my dad being an alcoholic and all that." Came Will's quiet voice, looking up from the beer to Steve's face.

"That's cool man. Just take it slow, you don't have to get as shitfaced as the rest of us."

"Okay, thanks."

"Now, let's get this pre-party started!"

It had been a good two hours since Steve's pre-party started, and another hour since people had started turning up. Will was on his second beer. He was pretty sure he was the soberest person there, but even then he was still pretty tipsy. As it turns out, the infamously scrawny 17 year old who could easily pass for a 14 year old was a major lightweight. He sat on Steve's living room couch watching people get blackout drunk and dance to the music Dustin, who was also a major lightweight but at least three times as many beers deep, put on. Needless to say, the music was god awful, but nobody cared because of the fact they wouldn't remember the night anyway. Will cared though. To him, this was a night of watching people fall over to some of the worst music he'd ever heard. Meanwhile, the boy he'd loved for half a decade was chatting up some of the girls who were too drunk to realise who they were talking to. It wasn't a fun night, to say the least. He'd vastly preferred it when it was just the five of them. People he knew, people he was comfortable with. Seeing all the people who bullied him and would've killed him the second they saw him at the party, had Steve not been there, made him uncomfortable, scared and sad as it was. But seeing Mike about to score himself a three-way with some of the girls who'd come was too much. He had to go. He stood up maybe a bit too fast and was very nearly sick. He decided to sit back down and maybe let himself sober up for a moment before making a scene as he left. He shut his eyes and tried to drown out the music as he leaned back into the couch. It felt like hours that he was left to his own thoughts but it was only a minute at max before he was interrupted by a familiar voice.

"Hey." Mike said. His eyes burst open and he turned to see his best friend sat on the couch next to him.

"Hey..." he responded quietly.

"Looks like I need to catch up with you on drunkenness. I was holding back in case you wanted to hold back too but... clearly not."

"Mike. I'm two beers deep. I'm just a major fucking lightweight."

"Me too. That's why I've got Coke." Mike laughed, turning the bottle. Sure enough, it was a Coca-Cola logo on the side.

"When'd you get that?"

"The kitchen. I got it as I went to the bathroom like half an hour into the pre-party."

"Fuck, I forgot about the pre-party. God, that was so much better than this shit. Just the five of us. At least I can say I got invited to a party by Steve "The Hair" Harrington."

"Yeah, it was a lot better. Quieter. Less drunk Dustin music."

Will laughed, "Yeah, so much better. What was up with the girls?" He asked, wincing ever so slightly at the word "girls".

"Oh, basically the blonde one wanted to, y'know," Mike imitated sex, making Will laugh, "and I was gonna be like 'fine whatever' and just go with it. It's not often a guy like me gets with a girl at a Harrington party. But then, the other one decided she wanted to join in, which was too much for me. It took a while to let them down politely."

"I thought you were trying to get it on with them." Will chuckled quietly.

"Not actively. I wasn't all too bothered."

"I get it."

There was an awkward silence for a moment before Mike spoke up again, "Why were you in such a rush to stand up? Before, I mean."

"Oh..." Will thought to himself, "I think all the people who want us dead for no reason is just too overwhelming. So I wanted to get out of here."

"Makes sense. Well, let's go. We'll figure out a way home or something, because nobody else can drive and I don't much wanna steal Steve's car."

"Really? You'd leave just for me?"

"Yeah, sure, I'm bored anyways." Mike smiled as Will's eyes filled up. He pulled the lanky boy into a hug and whispered "thank you" as he pulled away. Mike helped Will up slowly and walked him out to the front of the house, where Steve was.

"Where are you guys going?" Steve asked them.

"Just going home, Will's gonna be sick if we don't go." Mike answered, opening the front door.

"I'd offer to drive you but... y'know." He lifted the beer in his hand.

"It's fine, we can walk. See you guys later!" Will said, walking out behind Mike and shutting the door. The pair tried to look at each other but couldn't see a thing.

"Fuck. Looks like we're gonna have to feel our way home." Mike joked.

"My place is pretty close by, so we could try there first then get our bearings and figure out how you're gonna get home."

"Okay... do you know the way?"

"Yeah, I think."

"Then go ahead, just try to stay close enough for me to follow you."

"You got it."

Despite his tipsiness, Will was surprisingly good at getting home. He was only a block away at most, so it wasn't exactly hard, but it still impressed Mike. When Will left for Mike's place earlier in the day, he'd left his bedroom window open, knowing that Joyce wouldn't shut it in case he wanted to come home early. The pair climbed in and turned on the light, causing the pair to wince as they sat on Will's bed.

"Just as I was getting used to the dark too." Mike mumbled.

"At least you aren't drunk too." Will said dryly, making Mike laugh.

"I guess that's a plus." Mike responded, followed by a short silence which was broken by Will.

"If it's too dark for you to get home, you can stay here. Mom and Hop will understand."

"Thanks Will, I couldn't do that shit all the way home on my own."

Will laughed quietly, "I'm about to pass out, so feel free to find a place to sleep. On the floor or in bed, I really don't care." He said, before lying down on the bed and near instantly falling asleep.

Mike sat on the end of the bed quietly. Just a few days earlier he'd realised who he was, albeit a bit late for his liking, and now he was being offered to sleep alongside the boy who made him realise who he was. It wasn't anything out of the ordinary; they'd been doing this since they were kids, but with this newfound identity it felt different. But he was happy to do it, so he did. He laid himself down next to Will and put his head on the pillow, closing his eyes as he drifted off to sleep.

He woke up at 9am, mildly hungover, and turned over to see... nobody. "Mike?" Will asked, thinking his friend had left. He heard a sound from off the end of the bed which vaguely sounded like a response. He pulled himself over and saw Mike face down on the ground. "You know it wasn't necessary to sleep on the floor." He told him.

"I didn't." Mike grumbled as he turned over and sat up.

"Well maybe not the whole time." Will said, smiling as Mike got up and stretched. He sat down on the bed next to Will.

"How hungover are you?" He asked.

"Not too much. Was definitely a mistake to have a grand total of two beers."

"Probably. At least you know your limits."

"Yeah. Now I know to only have one beer after Steve invites us to a party."

Mike laughed and the two continued to talk for a while, just like they used to. They could talk for hours when they were kids, but that had changed after the fight in '85. Despite travelling together pretty much alone for six days, along with four days on a boat, it wasn't the same. Will didn't know if it was because he was still a little drunk, but he was actually able to talk to Mike like they'd done so many years ago. And that was all he needed, for now. Now if only he could tell Mike that maybe it *was* his fault...

That can come later. Let's just be kids again, for once.

Steve woke up on his couch, Dustin splayed out in the middle of the living room floor, still holding a beer, while Robin sat on the kitchen, chugging coffee to try and wake herself up. Steve sat up and said hi from across the room. It looked like everyone was gone, so it was just him and Robin in this moment.

"Hey." She said in response before returning to her coffee.

"Do you think it worked?"

"Do I think what worked?"

"The plan?" Steve told her. Robin looked back, confused. "With Mike and Will? Mike took Will home early last night because Will was 'gonna be sick'."

"Are you serious? He was only like a beer deep!"

"Two actually, but do you see what I'm saying?"

"I see you... either it was a total success or Mike is just completely oblivious to Will's advances."

"Or they're both oblivious to each other."

"I don't know, Will seems like a smart guy."

"They both are, but they're both oblivious to shit like this. Neither of them know what actual love is because they've never been with someone they actually loved."

"To be fair Steve, neither have I."

"I know. That's why I'm the leading authority."

"What's the plan if they don't get together?"

"We'll figure it out. For now though, I'm still pretty drunk. Wanna see if Tammy Thompson has moved to Nashville yet?"

"Fuck yeah!"

8. Chapter 8: The Confession

Senior year was over. College was on the horizon. He had to ask him to come, but not in a gay way. They weren't gay. Just... to be roommates. *No, that would be weird.*

Yeah, probably. Bad idea.

What if he says yes though? After the party you two have been getting along way better than before.

He won't surely not. He's just gonna think it's weird becau-

"Guys, I'm gay."

Mike was pulled out of his mind and back to reality as Will came out to the party in the basement. His eyes widened in shock and he felt an emotion wash over him that he could only compare to hugging Will that cold, November night.

"Tell us something we don't know, Byers." Lucas joked, making Will smile a little. "It doesn't change a thing man, we still love you. Besides, who really cares if someone as wise as Will the Wise is gay?"

"Yeah Will, you're still the same old guy that we knew all those years ago." Dustin added.

"All eight years ago. You guys are on the brink of death at this point." Max laughed.

"Shut it, Max." Retorted Dustin, as El got up to hug Will. They held each other tight as Mike sat in astonishment at the revelation. El finally let go and Mike continued to stare, mouth open.

"Will..." he began before falling silent. He couldn't come clean here, no matter how much he wanted to. He was still very sensitive about his feelings. "Just so you know, coming up to you that day was the best movement I've ever made. Asking you to be my friend was the best thing I've ever done. And you saying yes is the best thing I've ever heard." Seemed a bit too much for the situation.

"Mike?" Will asked, looking anxious for Mike's response.

"This doesn't change the fact that asking you to be my friend is the best decision I've ever made." He said, smirking. He stood up and Will stood up too and they embraced. As they got closer, Mike saw the tears in his eyes as his best friend smiled. They held each other tight and there was that wave of emotion again, the same one from November and the same one from just moments before. That basically secured it in his mind. *Yup, definitely gay for Will.* Suddenly, he felt a surge of confidence. He realised that nobody had hated Will for being gay, so surely they would accept him. He heard a "thanks" from Will as he pulled away, and decided that now was the time.

A lot raced through his mind as he hugged Mike. He didn't want to let him go but knew Mike would be weirded out if they hugged for too long. He didn't want to just hug but he knew Mike would be weirded out if he kissed him. Mike wasn't gay and that was something Will would have to come to terms with. He just wanted Mike to be happy, so it was fine for Mike to be off with some other girl. But he would be lying if he said that he didn't secretly hope for Mike to be gay and in love with him, but that was completely ridiculous. "Thanks Mike." He whispered before pulling away.

"It's okay, man." Mike said before turning to the rest of the group. "I guess now is as good a time as any..." he began before pausing. "I don't know why it took me so long to realise but since Will's just up and said it I guess I will." The world moved in slow motion. *What the fuck? Is Mike Wheeler, the boy who was obsessed with Eleven for years, actually fucking gay? After everything?* "I'm gay. It took a long time to realise, too long frankly. I didn't even know until..." he paused again, glancing at Will for a second before moving his eyes down. "Recently. I guess what I'm saying is sorry to El for wasting so much of your time trying to tear your face off in a desperate attempt to hide the feelings I had, and sorry to Will. For *that argument*." He looked back and Will could see tears form in his eyes. Both he and Lucas knew what Mike had said but neither knew how much it had hurt Will. Until today.

"Mike, you don't have to apologise, you didn't know." He said, laughing affectionately.

"No, but I was an asshole. Plus, it's been like three years and we haven't talked about it. I had to apologise at some point."

"You were definitely an asshole." Lucas added.

"What happened?" Dustin asked, confused about what the fuck they were on about.

"A lot. It was midway through the Return of the Mind Flayer." Mike joked, making Will actually laugh about the situation. He laughed about the fucking Mind Flayer. He hadn't done that in a while, not genuinely at least. He'd feigned laughter but... this was genuine. Was it because he realised he might actually have a shot with Mike after all? Probably.

Everyone had reacted in the same way as they had with Will. Looking back, Mike felt stupid for not telling them when he realised a month ago, or when he started questioning it years ago. But he didn't. The past was in the past, so he figured it would be best to leave it there. Now was the present, and he knew that he had to tell Will something. But he still couldn't. Not now. Not yet. But soon. Definitely soon. He'd find a way to tell him as soon as he found the courage to risk losing his best friend.

The next morning, Steve was taking Dustin to breakfast. This had become a routine after Dustin had been with the Party for an afternoon, so that Steve could keep up with the gossip inside. After Starcourt he'd become very interested in the Party and their bond, but couldn't exactly join them. Dustin, though, was one of his best friends, and so they talked. A lot. The pair settled on a good old McDonalds Deluxe Breakfast before Steve asked what had gone on the previous night. "Not much." Dustin replied. "Will and Mike are gay, but that was really everything that happened."

Steve choked on his hash brown. "Not much? That's huge! Robin's gonna love this."

"Jesus, Steve, calm down. Why're you so happy about this?"

"I live with Murray Bauman, Dustin. I know when people want to get it on. So does Robin, because I taught her."

"Are you saying...?" Steve nodded.

"Yeah. I am."

"Wow. That's... super obvious in hindsight."

"The problem is the two are either completely oblivious to each other or incredibly good at hiding the fact that they're secretly dating by pretending to be oblivious."

"Definitely the first one. Both of them were shocked last night when they found out the other was gay."

"I see... the party was a set up. I knew that Will didn't like it around people like that, so me and Robin devised a plan to get Mike to take Will home."

"Smart..."

"Thanks. It was mostly my idea."

"Murray's not the only one that's been rubbing off on you then."

"What do you mean?"

"Let's face it Steve, before Robin you weren't exactly a genius."

"Wow, Henderson, I thought we were friends."

"Friends don't lie." Dustin said, not missing a beat. Steve smiled, having heard the Party talk about how friends don't lie many times.

"Good one."

"Thanks, been waiting to use that one on you for a while."

Earlier...

Mike sat on the couch in the basement. It was one in the morning and

everybody had already gone home and was probably asleep, but Mike just... couldn't. He held the radio in his hand; he had been for a good hour. He had to call him. Let him know. He knew that, by lunch, Steve would know that he was gay and would try to set him up, because that was what Steve did. When Mike thought he was straight Steve had gotten him plenty of dates, why would it be different now? He had to know whether or not Will liked him back before that happened, so he wouldn't be distracted if or when Steve ended up getting him dates. He pressed the talk button down. "Will? You awake? Over."

"Yeah. Over."

The reply was fast, as if Will had been sat there with his radio in hand the whole time.

"How you doing? Over."

"Good... I feel different now, but good. Over."

"Me too..." He was too lost in thought to say over.

"Is something up?" Will had seemingly given up too.

"Kinda... can you come over?"

"Sure. I'm not drunk this time, so I can get there. Give me fifteen minutes and I'll be there."

Mike laughed quietly. "Okay. I'll talk to you then, Will. I'm in the basement. Over and out."

He turned the radio off and sat back on the couch. *Oh fuck, we're really doing this, huh?* He thought.

Oh fuck, we are.

Shit this was a mistake, call ba-

No. We have to know. What if he says yes?

What if he says no? We'll lose him just like we did in '83.

Will's not like that, he would still want to be friends with us. It's not like he hates gays.

We need to think over what we're gonna te-

There was a knock at the door. Mike checked his watch. It had been fifteen minutes. *Fuck. Last chance to back out.* He hesitated, but stood up, walking to the door. He opened it and there stood Will, clearly cold. "Oh Jesus man, come in. You look freezing."

"It's midnight Mike, it's safe to assume it's gonna be cold. I didn't think it would be *that* cold though. It's summer, after all."

Mike closed the door behind Will before continuing, "I just wanted to make it clear that I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be that-"

"Please don't. You've already said sorry enough today Mike." Will said, flopping down to the couch. "Besides, you were wrong anyway."

"What do you mean?" Mike asked, sitting next to him.

"It's not my fault you don't like girls.' You were wrong."

"What, are you not gay?"

Will laughed, "God, you're oblivious. You were wrong about whose fault it was. It's been your fault since we were twelve, Mike. I've liked you for so long, like, *like* liked you. And... I don't know, I thought it would go away when we moved, but it didn't. I thought it did, but..." he gulped, "I was doing... *it*... and I couldn't stop thinking about you instead of her. And it's not just like that, I love the way that we were able to talk for hours when we were young and like we've been able to do since the party. I love how you know practically everything that makes me uncomfortable and make an active effort to help me out. I love... you."

"Will, I..."

"I understand if you don't feel the same way, but I wanted you to know how I felt. It's convenient that you asked me here because I couldn't pluck up the courage to ask you over. I just want you to be happy, however that is."

Mike sat, astounded.

That went better than expected.

No shit.

What now?

Kiss him, I guess?

Mike grabbed Will and pushed his lips to his best friend's. *Fuck they're soft. And warm.* Will held Mike and pulled him tighter, grabbing his hair. Mike felt every pent up emotion pour out. He felt all of his worries melt away. He felt that feeling come back, but even stronger. He felt his lungs begging for air and pulled away, just to breathe. Will smiled and rested his forehead against Mike's. "Clearly I wasn't the only one feeling like this."

"Clearly not."

"So... how did I do?"

"I thought the fact that you started with your sexual fantasies was a bit weird but oth-"

"No, idiot. The kiss. You've got so much experience with El, I figured you'd be able to grade me."

"I can inform you that you passed with flying colors." Mike said, smirking, "Best I've ever had."

"Thanks..." Will whispered, moving his head down to Mike's much easier to reach shoulder and nestling his head in his neck as tears of joy dripped from his eyes. "Wanna do it again?" He asked, looking up.

"Oh absolutely."

And they did. They sat in the basement for what felt like hours cuddling and kissing before they eventually passed out in each others arms.

Steve and Dustin parted ways, both staying in touch on their radios as Dustin went to check on Mike. He went down to the basement door and found it, surprisingly, unlocked. He pushed it open quietly and turned to the couch where he saw Mike and Will sleeping, the latter using the first as a pillow, as they held each other. Realisation slowly dawned in Dustin's head and, as quietly as he came in, he walked back out, shutting the door behind him. He pulled the radio out and started talking. "Steve. Come in."

"What's the news?" Came Robins voice from the other end of the radio.

"Is Steve there?"

"Yeah right here buddy." Steve said.

"Great. I went to Mike's. They're on the couch, sleeping and hugging."

"Really? Finally." Steve said.

"Don't be a creep though, let them get on with their business." Robin added.

"Isn't that the exact opposite of what you two have been doing?" Dustin asked, laughing quietly.

"That's... different." Robin replied, quietly.

"No, it's the same. We were pretty creepy." Steve said, laughing slightly.

"What was it that Will said at the party? 'So much for not wanting to feel like a pedophile'? What was that about?"

"I didn't wanna sleep in Mike's room."

"Yet you were willing to get some kids round to your place to get two different kids together?"

"I don't see the problem other than the fact that maybe we were a little nosey."

"Sure, tell yourself that." Dustin laughed again before telling them he had to go.

"Talk later, man. Don't tell anybody else though, it's bad enough for us to know, let alone the wrong people finding out."

"You got it. Talk to you guys later."

Mike woke up holding Will. *Oh fuck, it wasn't a dream.*

Is that a bad thing?

Absolutely not.

His shifting clearly woke up his... boyfriend? *Maybe not, yet.*

"Hey, babe." Will murmured as he woke up.

Nevermind.

"H-Hey!" Mike said, somewhat flustered at Will's greeting.

"Is something wrong?"

"No it's just... I didn't expect you to call me babe."

Will laughed, "Neither did I." An awkward silence followed before Will asked another question. "What are we?"

"I'd say boyfriends but that's still not exactly acceptable."

"Secret boyfriends?" Will asked, smirking.

"Yeah... yeah. Secret boyfriends."

"So, it's decided. What're we gonna do now?"

"I have no idea. Wanna go see a movie?"

"Sure, what's out?"

"Roger Rabbit looks pretty good."

"Yeah, it does. Let's go for it."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Great!"

After getting washed and changed, Mike took Will out to see the present Steve got him for his 17th birthday a while ago. "I still can't believe he gave you the Toddfather." Will said as he got in.

"Neither can I. I'm convinced that it's a fake and is gonna fall apart any second."

"Doesn't look like it, which is a plus. Now, let's get going."

Mike turned to Will. He looked cute in the oversized shirt he was borrowing from Mike. He pulled out a Hershey's bar and passed it to him before pulling out of the driveway. The two smiled as the last mixtape they listened to started back up. KISS began to play and Will laughed as he recognised the song. The chorus began and he sung. "I was made for lovin' you baby, you were made for lovin' me."